

Assessment of Citizens' Perception on the Independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission

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Abstract

The independence of election management bodies is very crucial and decisive in achieving credible and legitimate elections and sustaining a country's democracy. The study assessed citizens' perception on the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission. Descriptive survey technique was used with a sample size of two thousand respondents. Simple random sampling was used to sample respondents to answer the questionnaire and interview which were the research instruments. Result findings showed that all respondents (100%) said that the Electoral Commission is truly independent in spite of the challenges the body faces and all the respondents said that the role played so far by the Electoral Commission of Ghana has made the ballot box not only become the chosen means for electing political representatives, credible elections are also acknowledged as the only acceptable way to access power. The study concluded that the Electoral Commission of Ghana is independent and one of the best electoral bodies in Africa and elections are one of principal cornerstones for democracy and political stability to thrive. The study recommended that Electoral Commission of Ghana should continue to involve and connect all stakeholders on a regular basis, providing the information they require to partake fully in and appraise the electoral process.

Keywords: Elections, democracy, Franchise, Ghana, legitimate power, electoral commission

1.0 Introduction

There has been an enormous increase in interest in the conduct of democratic elections throughout the world since the late 70s and universal call towards the creation of independent electoral bodies accountable for all aspects of the electoral process from the registration of qualified voters, the registration of political parties, the nomination of candidates, the conduct of and the declaration of the results. Conducting democratic elections demands that electoral bodies be, and be seen to be, impartial and independent to discharge their mandate effectively and efficiently. This is a vital area, as the election body makes and implements essential decisions that may manipulate and influence the result of the elections.

Elections with credibility and integrity are the foundation of democracy. The honest and impartial operation of electoral bodies is critical to successful election organisation, building and maintaining citizens' confidence in the election process. National electoral bodies tend to run and function most successfully when they are permanent and operate independently, impartially and transparently. Independent, impartial and transparent electoral bodies make important contributions to democracy and the rule of law and they create better opportunities for enhancing transparency and public confidence in elections by protecting the franchise but flawed elections can undermine democracy greatly.

According to Elklit & Reynolds (2002: 86-87), connotes "the extent to which political actors see the entire electoral process as legitimate and binding", has been seen as principal to democratic promotion and consolidation. The credibility, freedom and fairness of any elections in turn depend greatly on the effectiveness of electoral body, defined in terms of strict adherence to the rules of the election before, during and after elections. Power is in the hands of the citizens and during election times, the citizens vote to empower their elected representatives.

In emerging democracies, there has been an increasing trend to create independent electoral bodies. This is identified as a significant action in building a tradition of independence and impartiality, as well as building the confidence of the electorate and political parties in the electoral process. While some countries have made significant progress in terms of conducting periodic elections, much less progress has been made in terms of the effectiveness of electoral management and the total quality of the elections, measured by the level of competition, participation and legitimacy of the election.

The legitimacy of an election generally has to do with the extent at which political stakeholders particularly political parties accept the outcome of elections in a peaceful and open manner. Rakner & Svasand (2003:4) lend credence to this when they argue that 'the legitimacy of the electoral process hinges on the electorates' and candidates' perception that the process has been conducted in a way that does not in advance ensure a certain outcome. It is acknowledged that dealing with the capacity of an electoral management body in isolation will not basically give free, fair and legitimate elections. It is very imperative to focus on the total political environment in which the elections take place. The United Nations therefore also makes efforts to build capacity outside the electoral authorities. This involves working with voters, the media, political parties and civil

society, as well as other actors and institutions of democratic governance such as parliament and the judiciary.

The Electoral Commission of Ghana has achieved independence, professionalism and assertiveness with every successive election since 1992. In a nation-wide survey held in 2002, an overwhelming majority (80%) of an expert panel assessed the commission as 'always or largely' impartial and transparent in its activities (cited in Agyeman-Duah, 2005: 35). Therefore, this study assesses citizens' perception on the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Election organisation in new and emerging democracies faces a huge challenge. The integrity of the elections in this modern era of democratic dispensation must be ensured by electoral bodies with the constitutional status of independence from government, political parties' and other bodies and expected to perform their assigned task according to the rules and regulations as well as meeting internationally acceptance standards of good practice. It is acknowledged that elections are the foundation of democracy and elections do not promote and enhance the cause of democracy if they are rigged, manipulated and corrupt but rather they will hinder; in fact, they hinder the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

Making the needed attempt to ensure that elections are conducted with integrity assist to achieve the reality of the Universal declaration of human rights and inspiring international treaties: a world where governments are mindful of the inherent dignity and equality of every individual, and respect their right to have a voice in how they are governed. It is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "*everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country,*" and that the will of the *people "shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections."*

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) lays the legal basis for the principles of democracy under international law, particularly: freedom of expression (Article 19); the right of peaceful assembly (Article 21); the right to freedom of association with others (Article 22); the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives (Article 25); the right to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors (Article 25). The Covenant is binding on those States that have ratified it. As of July 2012, the number of parties to the Covenant was 167, which constitutes approximately 85 per cent of the United Nations membership (United Nations global issues). The spread of multi-party democracy across continents has created and established an unprecedented reality in world politics, which deserves a lot of research. There is much research on elections particularly how to make electoral bodies independent and impartial, ensuring free and fair elections. The independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission has centred on panel of experts' assessment and would be worthy and imperative to assess citizens' perception on the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission to contribute to the emergent body of knowledge on the conduct of elections and democratic consolidation in Africa.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess citizens' perception on the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission. The specific objectives of the study were the following:

1. To examine citizens' knowledge on the functions of Electoral Commission of Ghana.
2. To find out citizens' views on Electoral Commission of Ghana's role in Ghana's democratic development.
3. To assess citizens' perception on the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission in the exercise of its functions.
4. To offer recommendations base on the study findings.

1.4 Research Questions

The general research question for the study was how do citizens perceive the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission.

Specific questions were the following:

1. What is the level of citizens' knowledge on the functions of Electoral Commission of Ghana?
2. What are citizens' views on Electoral Commission of Ghana's role in Ghana's democratic development?
3. How do citizens perceive the independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission in the exercise of its functions?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Independent Electoral Body and its Roles

Independent electoral bodies is a legally established body in charge of more than conducting credible, free and fair the election in a country without interference from any individuals, government, political parties and other

bodies. An Independent electoral body is the caretaker of the integrity and legitimacy of election which is a critical segment of the democratic process. They perform their functions accordingly and work in a transparent and impartial manner and, where right, discuss with all stakeholders on significant matters, make well thought-out policy decisions and, preferably, make known those decisions where stakeholders including electorates and political parties have access to information on the electoral procedures and process.

The vital role performed by electoral management bodies (EMBs) to make sure national consensus as well as citizens and stakeholder confidence in the electoral process is very paramount. Critical and decisive to the helpfulness and support of EMBs is their credibility. For that reason, ensuring that the persons running the election are considered impartial and competent by the electorates, political parties and contesting aspirants should be supreme. Without a doubt, if the electorates and political actors have confidence in the integrity of the persons and bodies running the election, they are more probable to acknowledge the election result in good faith. The worth of an election, according to Elklit & Reynolds (2002: 86-87), is determined by “the extent to which political actors see the entire electoral process as legitimate and binding.”

Winners and losers can agree to electoral processes and results as satisfactory provided the elections meet some conventional principles and standards, conspicuously participation, free and fair, competition and legitimacy. These indicators of democratic feature can only be guaranteed provided the EMBs meet various essential requirements that support and build up efficient electoral administration. These requirements have been acknowledged to take account of the independence of the electoral management bodies. Under the doctrine of electoral democracy, all electorates have the same rights to partake as voters and aspirants; every one must have equal voting power; the secrecy of the vote must be guaranteed; electorates must have momentous access to electoral and campaign information; election supervision must be conducted in a free, fair and impartial way; elections must be conducted periodically; and the outcome of elections be required to be determined by the unreservedly cast votes of the qualified electorates.

Independent electoral bodies are considered principally in requisites of their composition, independence, enthusiasm, transparency and broad-spectrum capability. These conditions are vital in order for the EMBs to successfully fulfill their functions. Added pertinent bodies including political parties, mass media, civil service, the security agencies, civil society groups (CSOs), also require to efficiently participate in election process. The supervision functions of the parliament and judiciary are also very fundamental (Jinadu, 1997; Elklit & Reynolds, 2002; Mozaffar & Schedler, 2002).

To make administrators and participants accountable, legal and institutional frameworks provide for oversight and enforcement of election laws. Continuous oversight of the process by internal and external mechanisms can help detect problems in the system and identify the groups or individuals responsible. The use of lawful and regulatory procedures is indispensable to manage the dealings of individual and singular interests. Enforcement actions are a restriction to persons pondering unlawful or unscrupulous activities, and provide to reprimand individuals who have gone contrary to the laws.

The idea of impunity and inadequate of enforcement of laws can give confidence to an atmosphere of rigging, fraud and poor conduct of elections. Continuing enforcement of rules and regulations is significant precedence in dealing with rigging, fraud and other manipulations from the election process, bringing folks answerable to integrity, and maintaining a sense of confidence in the electoral conduct.

2.2 Democracy and the Conduct of Elections

Democracy is one of the universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations. It is based on the freely expressed will of people and closely linked to the rule of law and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Democracy, and democratic governance in particular, means that people’s human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, promoted and fulfilled, allowing them to live with dignity. People have a say in decisions that affect their lives and can hold decision-makers to account, based on inclusive and fair rules, institutions and practices that govern social interactions. Women are equal partners with men in private and public spheres of life and decision-making, and all people are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attribute.

The United Nations also has established relations with regional and intergovernmental organisations involved in electoral assistance, including the African Union, the European Union, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Southern African Development Community. Other partners are the many international non-governmental organizations working in the field of electoral assistance. These include institutions such as the Carter Center, the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. These relationships provide opportunities for collaboration on electoral support activities as well as for sharing lessons and experiences (UN global issue).

The political work of the United Nations demands that it promotes democratic outcomes; the development agencies seek to bolster national institutions like parliaments, electoral commissions and legal

systems that form the bedrock of any democracy; and the human rights efforts support freedom of expression and association, participation and the rule of law, all of which are critical components of democracy (UN global issue).

Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted in 1997 Universal Declaration on Democracy from where we can read that "as an ideal democracy aims to protect and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, instill social justice and foster economic and social development. Democracy is a political system that enables people to freely choose an effective, honest, transparent and accountable government." Election can not only be legitimate and credible, when electoral supervision is organized and held in a reasonably, orderly and proficient way.

In 2000, the UNDP adopted the promotion of democratic governance as one of its supporting principles in its development cooperation effort. UNDP considers democracy and good governance as a way to promote sustainable development. Year 2000 witnessed also the United Nation Millennium Summit which produced the United Nation Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals. While none of the MDGs deals directly with the promotion of democracy, it is nevertheless highlighted in the Millennium Declaration that democracy, good governance, rule of law and respect of human rights are the necessary conditions in order to fulfill MDGs. The section V of the Millennium Declaration underlines the core values of UN.

Elections are the fundamental tradition of democratic representative governments. Democracy flourishes on openness and accountability, with one very essential exemption: the act of voting itself. To cast a free ballot and curtail the prospect of threats and intimidation, electorates in a democracy must be allowable to cast their ballots in secret. At the same time, the protection of the ballot box and tallying of vote totals must be conducted as openly as possible, so that citizens are confident that the results are accurate and that the government does, indeed, rest upon their "consent." A credible, free and fair election in addition relies on freedom of speech, assembly, association and movement, and freedom from fear. Genuine elections too needs a transparent electoral process, equitable electoral laws, regulations and systems; equal opportunities for all participants, an free and unbiased election body; no victimisation and intimidation; appropriate measures; and precise tabulation and approval of the electoral results.

2.3 Constitutional Provisions of Ghana's Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission of Ghana was established by Article 43 (1) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. It is made up of seven (7) members; a Chairman, two Deputy Chairmen and 4 other Members. Article 43 (2) stipulates that

"The members of the Commission shall be appointed by the president under article 70 of this constitution."

The three Chairmen have permanent tenure of office and the same conditions of service as judges of the Superior Courts; i.e. the Chairman has conditions of service of Appeals Court Judges while the two Deputy Chairmen have conditions of service of High Court judges. The seven members of the Commission collectively constitute the policy-making and management body of the organisation, and exercise general supervision over the staff. The Commission is required to meet at least once every two months. On a day-to-day basis, the three Chairmen, exercise executive powers on behalf of the Commission. The Commission has about 1,450 employees and its administrative expenses are charged on the Consolidated Fund (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

2.4 Constitutional Functions of Ghana's Electoral Commission

The main functions of the Commission are outlined in the Electoral Commission Act, 1993 (Act 451), as amended by the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Act, 2003 section 2 by the substitution for paragraph (d) of the following "(d) to undertake the preparation of voter identity cards", and in section 12 subsection (1) by the substitution for paragraph (c) of the following: "(c) the issue of voter identity cards", and the repeal of the Identity Cards Decree, 1972 (N.R.C.D 129). It says:

- To compile the register of voters and revise it at such periods as may be determined by law;
- To demarcate the electoral boundaries of both national and local government elections;
- To conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda;
- To educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose;
- To undertake programmes for the expansion of the registration of voters; and
- To perform such other functions as may be prescribed by law.

In addition to what Article 45 stipulates, the Commission is assigned other functions in various parts of the Constitution. Article five (5) of the 1992 constitution assigns the Commission a role in the creation of new regions or the merger of existing regions. When it has been determined that there is substantial demand for the creation of a new region or the merger of existing regions, the Electoral Commission must hold a referendum on the matter in the affected area(s). Article 47 empowers the Commission to divide the country into parliamentary constituencies, bearing in mind certain factors; and to review the constituencies at intervals of not less than seven (7) years or within 12 months after the publication of population figures of a national census.

Article 51 empowers the Commission to make regulations for the effective performance of its functions. *“The Electoral Commission shall, by constitutional instrument, make regulations for the effective performance of its functions under this constitution or any other law, and in particular, for the registration of voters, the conduct of public elections and referenda, including provision for voting by proxy.”* Article 55 (6) of the constitution makes the Commission responsible for the registration of political parties. *“An organization shall not operate as a political party unless it is registered as such under the law for the time being in force for the purpose.”* Article 63 (2) assigns to the Commission the responsibility of setting the date for a presidential election and Article 89 (1) empowers the Commission to make regulations for and supervise the election of the regional representatives of the Council of State. Article 290 (4) requires the Commission to hold a referendum in connection with a bill to amend an entrenched provision of the Constitution.

2.5 Independence of the Ghana’s Electoral Commission

Article 46 of the 1992 constitution provides that “except as provided in the constitution or any other law not inconsistent with the constitution, in the performance of its functions, the Electoral Commission shall not be subject to the control or direction of any authority”.

The Chairman and the two deputy Chairmen have permanent tenure of office and enjoy the same conditions of service as justices of the Superior Courts. The Commission has the power to hire and fire staff and is not under any obligation to accept staff from any quarters, apart from the Accountant Generals Office and the Supply & Stores Department under the Ministry of Finance (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

2.5 Statutory Functions of the Ghana’s Electoral Commission

It can be seen that the Constitution does assign a lot of responsibilities to the Electoral Commission. But even so, it is important to note that all the functions the Commission is required to perform cannot be found in the Constitution itself. Indeed, the Constitution tells us exactly that when it says the Commission will perform “such other functions as may be prescribed by law”. So, in addition to the functions assigned to the Commission in the Constitution, Parliament may, by law, give the Commission other responsibilities. We may refer to these other functions as statutory functions.

It is necessary then to turn to other laws to see what other functions have been assigned to the Commission. These laws either amplify a function conferred by the Constitution by setting it out in more detail, or confer an entirely new function (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

The Electoral Commission Act, 1993 (Act 451) 2.(g) adds to the functions of the Commission the proper storage of election materials. 11. Requires the Commission to keep proper books of accounts and the necessary records to be audited annually by the Auditor General. Political Parties Law, 2000 (Act 574) amplifies the Constitution’s provisions on political parties by setting out in more detail conditions relating to forming and maintaining political parties. It also confers on the Commission the power to cancel the registration of a political party and the circumstances under which this power may be exercised. The law further makes the Electoral Commission responsible for supervising the election of the national and regional executive officers of registered political parties.

Public and Political Party Office Holders (Declaration of Assets and Eligibility) Law, 1992 (PNDCL. 280). The Law requires political party office holders to submit their declaration of assets forms to the Commission. Section 11 (5) empowers the Commission to make regulations prescribing the procedure and conditions for the nomination of candidates, what declarations are to be made and how much deposit is to be paid by candidates.

Local Government Act, 1993 (Act 462) Section 1 (3), (4) and (5) require the Commission, when directed by the President, to make recommendations in connection with the creation of a new district. The Commission must ascertain that the area concerned is geographically contiguous and economically viable; and that there are at least 75,000 people in the case of a district, 95,000 people in the case of a municipality and 250,000 in the case of a metropolis. Section 2 requires the Commission, upon a request by the President, to review the areas of authority of district, municipal or metropolitan council and unit committees.

Section 9 provides that 25% of the registered voters in an electoral area may petition the Electoral Commission for a recall of their assembly member. Upon receipt of such a petition, the Commission is required to conduct a referendum to decide the issue. At least 40% must vote in favour of the recall for it to succeed. The Commission’s other statutory functions entail conducting or supervising elections for various bodies in the country.

They include the following:

- The election of five (5) members of each Regional House of Chiefs to the National House of Chiefs.
- The election of the President and Vice- President of the National House of Chiefs, as well as each Regional House of Chiefs;

- The election of the executive officers of the Ghana Medical and Dental Association; the Veterans Association of Ghana (VAG); and the Trades Union Congress.
- The election of the Presiding Member of a District Assembly; and
- Approval by a District Assembly of the District Chief Executive nominated by the President.
- The Electoral Commission is often called upon to provide services, which it is not required by any law to provide. The major service in this regard is organizing, supervising or conducting elections for various organizations to select their executive officers. The Commission readily performs these services in the belief that such elections constitute a learning process for the members of the organization and that this in turn facilitates its work during general elections (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

The Commission is also sometimes called upon to issue identity cards to members of an organization (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012).

2.6 Structure of the Electoral Commission of Ghana

The framework of the current structure of the Electoral Commission can be found in three articles of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

Article 43 (1) provides that the Commission shall consist of the seven (7) members:

- (a) A Chairman
- (b) The Chairman is the chief executive officer of the Commission;
- (c) (b) Two Deputy Chairmen
- (d) The two Deputy Chairmen are in charge of the two broad divisions of the Commission; i.e. Finance and Administration and the Operations divisions; and
- (e) (c) Four other Members.
- (f) **Appointment of Officers**
- (g) Article 52 requires the Commission to appoint officers and other employees in consultation with the Public Services Commission. From this rudimentary structure, the Commission has established a more elaborate three-tier structure consisting of the Head Office, Regional Offices and District Offices.
- (h) **Functional Divisions**
- (i) The Commission has two (2) broad areas or functional divisions, namely; (a) Operations Division (b) Finance and Administration Division.
- (j) Each functional Division is headed by a Deputy Chairman (Operations) and Deputy Chairman (Finance and Administration).
- (k) **Head Office**
- (l) The Commission is located at the Head Office in Accra, even though by law the Commission can meet anywhere in Ghana designated by the Chairman. The Commission is required to meet at least once in every two (2) months, that is, six (6) times a year.
- (m) The seven (7) members of the Commission collectively constitute the policy-making and management body of the organization and exercise general supervision over the activities of its staff. Section 7 of the Electoral Commission Act, 1993 (Act 451) empowers the Commission to appoint such Committees as it considers necessary for the discharge of its functions. Such committees may include persons who are not members of the Commission, but must be chaired by a member of the Commission. The decisions of such committees are not binding on the Commission.
- (n) On a day-to-day basis, the Commission is represented by the Chairman and the two (2) Deputy Chairmen, who are permanently situated at the Head Office. Collectively or individually, they perform the managerial functions of the Commission.
- (o) **Departments**
There are seven (7) departments at the Head office. Each of these departments is headed by a Director. The departments are: - Elections; Finance; Information Technology; Human Resource and General Services; Research and Monitoring; Training; and Public Affairs.
- (p) **Regional Offices**
- (q) A director, assisted by at least one deputy regional director, heads a regional office of the Commission. Unlike the head office, a regional office and its staff are not formally organized into functional divisions and departments. A Regional Director and his staff combine both Operations and Finance and Administration functions. As a result, a Regional Director reports to the Commission through the Head Office Directors, as the case may be.
- (r) **District Offices**
- (s) A District Electoral Officer (DEO) reports directly to his or her Regional Director, and heads a District Office of the Commission. Like a Regional Office, a District Office has no functional divisions or departments.

Election Officials

During elections, the Commission engages thousands of officials of various categories in temporary elections duties. They are not formally part of the Commission, but their services are so vital to the work of the Commission that they must be regarded as an informal part of the structure of the Electoral Commission. The District Electoral Officer (DEO) recruits and works closely with these officials. In this connection, the DEO is required to:

- Recruit the best persons available for the job at hand.
- Organize and supervise their proper training.
- Instill in them the correct attitude towards electoral work (impartiality, probity, Accountability etc) and to maintain the integrity of the Commission.
- Co-ordinate their activities in the spirit of team work; and
- Accord them, the importance, respect and dignity that they deserve (Source: Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2012)

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey technique was used for this study. Descriptive research is an all-inclusive research method and it can integrate quantitative data such as the use of empirical information, or can illustrate qualitative data. Descriptive research requires gathering data that will explain an event and presenting the information in a structured and commonly visual manner.

3.2 Research Population

The component population of the study comprised all individuals who are 18 years and above and are qualified electorates residing in the following 8 constituencies out of the 275 constituencies in Ghana: Asawase and Mampong constituencies in Ashanti Region, Sunyani East Constituency in Brong Ahafo Region, Upper Denkyira East, Upper Denkyira West, Twifo-Atii Morkwaa constituencies in the central Region, Amenfi East and Amenfi Central constituencies in Western Region. These constituencies were selected because of their proximity to the researcher.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for the study was two thousand respondents. Two hundred and fifty respondents from each constituency were chosen for the study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

This study engaged simple random sampling in selecting respondents to answer the questionnaire and responding the interview. Respondents were chosen based on their willingness and ability to answer to the questionnaire.

3.5 Research Instrument

Questionnaire and structured interview and were the principal research instruments employed to collect the data from the respondents. The questionnaire was employed in order to get a standard form of responses. The use of structured interview helped the researcher to mould the questions he asked the respondent in order to get the information they need for this project and observation was made to confirm the answers the respondents gave.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1.1 The Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender allotment of respondents is made known in (Table 1). From the table, 1095(54.75%) of respondents are males while 905(45.25) are females.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Male	1095	54.75
Female	905	45.25
Total	2000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.2 Age Distribution of the Respondents

The age allocation of the respondents is approximately equally divided between the youth and adult population.

Respondents who are 18 years to 25 years were 480(24%), 26-33 years were 466(23.3), 34-41 years were 409(16.4%), 50-57 years were 265(13.25%) and those response who are 58 years and above are 52(2.6%). Majority of the respondents were youth within the ages from 18-41 making 1355(67.75%)

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	480	24
26-33	466	23.3
34-41	409	20.45
42-49	328	16.4
50-57	265	13.25
58 and above	52	2.6
Total	2000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.1.3 Educational Background of Respondents

The educational background of respondents is indicated in Table 3. Educational attainment of respondents ranged from primary education to those with tertiary education. All the respondents had some form of education. Those respondents with primary education were 418(20.9%), secondary education is 876(43.8%) and tertiary education is 706(35.3%). The sample is skewed (43.8%) to those respondents with secondary education. If Citizens are well informed and knowledgeable, then it is coherent to assume that respondents will have a thorough knowledge on the real state of Ghana's Electoral Commission's independence

Table 3: Educational Level of Respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No education	-	-
Primary	418	20.9
Secondary	876	43.8
Tertiary	706	35.3
Total	2000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

4.4 Citizens' Knowledge on the Functions of Electoral Commission of Ghana

The researcher sought the respondents' knowledge of the functions perform by the Electoral Commission (EC) enshrined in the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana help achieve the study objective. All the respondents(100%) were able to state the work of the electoral Commission which are to compile the register of voters and revise it at such periods as may be determined by law; to demarcate the electoral boundaries of both national and local government elections; to conduct and supervise all public elections and referenda; to educate the people on the electoral process and its purpose; to undertake programmes for the expansion of the registration of voters; and to perform such other functions as may be prescribed by law. The respondents' were happy about the kind of electoral process education at the Electoral Commission does organize for citizens through the various mass media.

4.5 Effective Electoral Commission Collaboration with Stakeholder

In line with the objective of the study, the researcher tried to ask the respondents if there is an effective collaboration between the Electoral Commission and the stakeholders as required owing to the fact that this collaboration supports and enhances the electoral process and create confidence and credibility in the electoral process. Table 4 indicates that almost all the respondents 1935(96.75%) agreed that there is an effective collaboration between the Electoral Commission and the stakeholders and only 65(3.25%) said there is a collaboration between the Electoral Commission and stakeholders but did not agree that it is effective.

Table 4: Respondents' View on EC's Collaboration

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	1935	96.75
No	65	3.25
Total	2000	100

Source: Field survey, 2012

During the interview, the respondents said Ghana's Electoral Commission has collaborated effectively with stakeholders, including establishing reputable relationships with political parties, media outlets, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, security services, and the judiciary. Almost all the respondents mentioned the Ghana Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) set up in 1994 by the electoral commission and political parties as a trust-building machinery, which ensures that processes leading to election challenges are brought to the fore for discussion and that answers are acknowledged for their resolution.

It is well acknowledged that democratic electoral processes must be inclusive, transparent, responsible, and considered to promote citizens' confidence.

4.6 Citizens' views on EC's Role in Ghana's Democratic Development.

Elections play a critical role in the democratic development of every country as well as political stability. Elections are supposed to be a practicable tool of advancement. This position has been accorded universally and there is a connection between democracy and development. It is understood that free and fair, credible elections, built on upon competition, participation and legitimacy will invigorate the civil society to hold the government answerable for its dealings and actions.

All the respondents (100%) said that the role played so far by the Electoral Commission of Ghana has made the ballot box not only become the chosen means for electing political representatives, credible elections are also recognised as the only acceptable way to access power. Ghana's presidential and parliamentary elections since 1992 as a noteworthy model of democracy in West Africa sub region and entire African continent. Ghana has conducted 5 successive elections peacefully in spite of challenges and the Electoral Commission is always ready to find better ways of improving elections. Very soon, Ghana will have its sixth election and the EC is going to use electronic voter registration and other technological tools which are intended to curtail election rigging in Ghana, and stressing useful ways to support electorates in exercising their franchise.

4.6 Citizens' Perception on the Independence of Ghana's Electoral Commission

The magnitude and importance of independent electoral commissions can never be understated in any credible and legitimate elections. The independence of the electoral commission is guaranteed by the Ghanaian constitution. The respondents' perception was sought to establish truly if Election Commission is independent through its activities and functions from 1992 presidential and Parliamentary Elections. All respondents (100%) said that the Electoral Commission is truly independent in spite of the challenges they face currently. Respondents said that the Electoral Commission of Ghana manages its own budget and work independently from government and other bodies' interference and there is a constitutional provision for the appointment and condition of service for the chairman and the two deputies. The respondents said they have the confidence in Ghana's Electoral Commission and Ghana's electoral processes

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is established that the Electoral Commission of Ghana is independent and one of the best electoral bodies in Africa based on the findings of the study and elections are one of principal cornerstones for democracy and political stability. They are the underpinning of the social contract through which elected leaders obtain authority and legitimacy to rule. Legitimate, free and fair, credible elections improve and boost prospects for democratic consolidation, whereas rigged, corrupt and manipulated elections have a propensity to destabilize and hinder socio-economic and political development.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Electoral Commission of Ghana should continue to involve and connect all stakeholders on a regular basis, providing the information they require to partake fully in and appraise the electoral process.
2. International community and regional organisations should continue to support electoral assistance by enhancing national possession electoral bodies and building national harmony on the election process.
3. Electoral Commission of Ghana should continue sustain its standards of professionalism in all areas of the electoral process consolidate transparency and consensus all the way through the electoral process:

before, during, and after elections

4. Electoral Commission of Ghana should work with all registered political parties, candidates polling agents, domestic election monitors and observers, international observers involved in monitoring the electoral process to create citizens' confidence.

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